

LATIN EROTIC ELEGY

An anthology and reader

*Edited with an introduction and
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third book was divided in two by the Renaissance humanists, but the present custom is to follow the ancient precedent. Poems 3.1 through 3.6 are elegies by an otherwise unknown poet named Lygdamus on his separation from a woman named Neaera. Poem 3.7 is an anonymous *Panegyric of Messalla* written in hexameters. Poems 3.8 to 3.12 are a series of anonymous elegies about Sulpicia's love for Cerinthus. They are designed to serve as an introduction to Sulpicia's own poems and are sometimes thought to have been written by Tibullus himself. Poems 3.13 through 3.18 are Sulpicia's own poems, while the last two poems are epigrams by Tibullus.

47. Sulpicia's poetry is important on several counts. First, she is the only woman writer of classical Latin poetry whose work has survived. Second, her obvious sophistication and independent spirit gives us insight into the character of the young women who frequented the circles in which elegiac poetry was read and composed. As the daughter of the jurist Servius Sulpicius and the niece of Messalla, she hailed from the most respectable of backgrounds but does not scruple to speak publicly of her affair. One cannot help but feel she could have held her own easily with the likes of Lesbia, Cynthia, or Delia, although her self-characterization is very different. Where the *dominae* are portrayed by their male poets as fickle and interested only in gifts, Sulpicia presents herself as the articulate daughter of a noble house who does not scruple to tread on convention and who expects fidelity and respect from her lover, Cerinthus. Third, her poetry represents an interesting fusion of the Catullan epigrammatic tradition and later elegiac practice. In general, her couplets are end-stopped. Her pentameters terminate in disyllabic words in every case but one. No poem is over ten lines long, and her prosody is heavily spondaic, although she scrupulously avoids resolution in the fifth foot. Her syntax is at times convoluted and difficult, but the narrative line of her brief collection is clear. Poem 3.13 is a programmatic poem that announces the impossibility of her remaining silent about her love. 3.14 and 3.15 are on the possibility of her being led out of town by her uncle on her birthday. 3.16 and 3.17 are poems of jealousy on Cerinthus's affair with a low-class *sororim* ("hussy") and his seeming indifference to Sulpicia's having taken ill. The final poem looks to reconciliation with Cerinthus after Sulpicia had stormed out of a tryst in an ill-conceived attempt to hide the intensity of her passion. The link between elegy and epigram is nowhere clearer than in Sulpicia where Catullan precedent is married with a strong narrative line and stylistic refinements characteristic of later elegy. The critical tradition that once saw these poems as the spontaneous effusions of an artless young girl has recently been shown to be more the product of romanticism and condensation than a careful reading of the poems.

Propertius

48. Sextus Propertius, born 49–47 BCE, was an equestrian from the city of Assisi. In the last poem of his first book, the *Momobiblos*, he tells us that he lost a kinsman in the siege of Perugia. This epigram serves as a *sphragis* or 'signature' to the first book. It deserves to be quoted in full:

Qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, Penates,
quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia.
si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra,
Italiae duris funera temporibus,
cum Romana suos egit discordia ciuis,
(sic mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor,
tu projecta mei perpeasa es membra propinqui,
tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo),
proxima supposito contingens Umbria campo
me genuit terris fertilis uberibus.

On account of our friendship, Tullus, you are always asking of what sort and from where is my family, and who are my household gods. If the Perusine graves of the Italian fatherland are known to you, as well as the deaths from that hard time when discord drove Rome's citizens (for this reason, you are especially painful to me, Etruscan dust that allowed the bones of my kinsman to be scattered, that covered them with no soil), fertile Umbria, right next door, touching the field below, gave birth to me in her rich land. (1.22)

The Perusine war, referred to in this poem, was among the most savage of those fought during the period of civil turmoil that marked the early life of Propertius.

49. Ostensibly a conflict over where to settle the veterans of Octavian and Mark Antony's victory over Caesar's assassins, the Perusine war represents an early round in the political maneuvering that would culminate in the battle of Actium. While Marc Antony regulated affairs in the east after the battle of Philippi (42 BCE), his brother, Lucius, served as Octavian's colleague in the consulship for 41 BCE. When the Northern Italian landowners protested against Octavian's plan to seize land for the veterans, Lucius took the opportunity to portray his brother as the landowners' champion. Riots broke out in Rome, and both sides assembled their troops. After some initial victories, Octavian cornered Lucius in the town of Perugia, where a siege was laid. Relief from other legions loyal to the Antonian cause never materialized due to factional infighting and an unwillingness on the part of the soldiers to fight against a plan whose purpose was to insure their own rewards. In the end, Octavian, although allowing Lucius to surrender and return to Rome,

put to death the entire town council of Perusia as well as three hundred senators and equestrians who had accompanied Lucius's army. It was a massacre that sent a chilling message, but one that Octavian, once he became Augustus, preferred to forget.

50. Propertius's choice to end his first collection of poetry with a poem that links his identity to those dying at Perusia marks a definitive distance from the Augustan regime, which retrospectively colors the whole book. Published in 28 BCE, the *Monobiblos* is not at first glance a book of political poetry. It is a collection of love poetry by a clever young poet. Yet, the refusal of politics is itself a political gesture and the significance of that gesture is woven into the order of the poems. Thus, poem 1.4, addressed to the iambic poet Bassus, proclaims Propertius's exclusive devotion to Cynthia despite the temptations Bassus dangles before him. Poem 1.5 warns Gallus – generally believed to be Cornelius Gallus, Propertius's predecessor in the genre – to keep away from Cynthia. Poem 1.6, like 1.22, is addressed to Tullus, the poet's patron. He is a rich young aristocrat about to embark on a tour of government service and invites Propertius to accompany him. Such a voyage would normally represent a highly valued entrée into the world of public affairs that a young man was expected to make his own. Propertius, however, refuses to leave Cynthia and rejects the invitation. The next poem, 1.7, purports to teach Ponticus the superiority of elegy over epic, while 1.8a and 1.8b demonstrate the efficacy of elegy in persuading Cynthia not to leave on a journey. Thus, the poet begins the sequence by proclaiming the superiority of his elegiac devotion to a single beloved over the traditional light-hearted promiscuity of iambic poetry. He then argues for the superiority of his love poetry over that of his predecessor, Gallus. In 1.6, this same poetry, in the person of its dedicatee, Cynthia, prohibits the poet from following a normal career path, which would involve direct participation in the political structures sponsored by the Augustan regime. In 1.7, he argues for elegy's superiority over the genre that celebrates the virtues of the career path he has just rejected, epic. Lastly, 1.8 is an object lesson in the power of elegy itself. In sum, the heart of the *Monobiblos* weaves together the life of love, the superiority of the elegiac genre to its competitors, and the refusal of traditional Roman values into a single indissoluble whole. Read in light of 1.22's evocation of the slaughter at Perusia, it is hard not to see the poet's choice of genre as necessarily, though not exclusively, politically motivated. *Seruitium amoris* is portrayed as an antidote to the *seruitium* inherent in normal life.

51. Yet, such a picture of Propertius as an anti-Augustan aesthete, while in one sense accurate, is too black and white. His second book, published in 25 or 26, complicates this two-dimensional picture. In the first poem, we discover that our poet has now moved into the circle of Maecenas, a close advisor and political ally of Augustus. Maecenas has been styled Augustus's minister of culture. This is an oversimplification. He was a man of letters and a patron of the arts with a keen eye for talent. Among the writers in his circle

when Propertius joined it were Horace and Vergil. These poets were clearly in sympathy with the Augustan program, although they were not uncritical of it. Thus, while parts of the *Aeneid* have been read as veiled warnings to Augustus on the dangers of *furor* ("rage") and revenge, the poem nonetheless celebrates the Augustan peace and Rome's *imperialium sine fine* ("rule without end"). Likewise, though Horace counsels moderation and gently warns of the dangers of tyranny, he also pictures Augustus as the earthly representative of Jupiter himself. Neither poet produced anything like Propertius 1.22's harsh reminder of the slaughter at Perusia.

52. Still, there is little evidence that Maecenas demanded made-to-order verse from his poets and there was good reason for many to be optimistic about the reign of Augustus. The victor at Actium in 31 BCE proved clement in a way that the young *triumvir* of 41 had not. By 29 BCE, the era of the civil wars was at an end and Augustus, while retaining *de facto* power (*auctoritas*), chose to respect traditional republican forms of government. In addition, he launched an ambitious building program for the city that included the refurbishing of many temples and the revival of the ancient rites celebrated in their precincts. Lastly, under the slogan of a return to the *mos maiorum*, Augustus passed a series of laws promoting marriage and childbirth among the upper classes while penalizing adultery. These latter measures were controversial, and they had to be amended and revised on several occasions due to popular outcry. Nonetheless, to many, the *auctoritas* (as opposed to *imperium*, "formal legal power") of the victor of Actium meant a return to stability and normalcy after a hundred years of unrest and civil slaughter. Maecenas, therefore, did not have to dictate patriotic topics to his poets, and their occasional straying from the strict party line merely showed his and Augustus's respect for the traditional republican virtue of *libertas*, "freedom of speech."

53. Propertius, however, strayed more than most in Maecenas's circle. Poem 2.1 is a *recusatio*, a common type of poem in the period, in which a poet alleges his inability to write one kind of verse, normally epic, and indicates his preference for staying with a less strenuous form such as lyric or elegy. In itself, the *recusatio* is not necessarily a subversive gesture. Horace writes them as well as Propertius, and they are an expected part of the Callimachean poet's arsenal of weapons for fending off the threat of epic composition. Nonetheless, when Propertius tells Maecenas that if he were able to write epic he would compose a poem on Augustus's fears during the civil wars, including the battle of Perusia, one can only imagine that both the *principes* and the patron were relieved by Propertius's refusal. The massacre of Roman senators and equestrians was hardly in keeping with the image Augustus wished to project as the guarantor of peace and the restorer of traditional morality. In poem 2.7, the interdependence of the poetic, the political, and the sexual in elegy is demonstrated when Propertius and Cynthia celebrate the repeal of a law that would have forced the poet to marry and break off

their irregular relationship. There has been considerable debate over whether the law in question is one of Augustus's moral reform laws or a piece of earlier triumphal legislation taxing unmarried men. In either case, poem 2.7 shows Propertius in particular, and elegy in general, as out of keeping with the spirit of the Augustan reforms. By the same token, poems 2.15 and 2.16, both of which deal with the battle of Actium, show the poet identifying with the cause of Antony as much as with that of Augustus.

54. It would be a mistake, then, to see Propertius's move into the circle of Maecenas as a recantation of the position he adopts at the end of the *Mambi-lor*. Moreover, the politics of this are very complex. On the one hand, the poet shows his acceptance of the new regime by becoming the close associate of one the *prinsepis*'s most trusted advisors. On the other, the *prinsepis* is able to demonstrate his liberality by, in effect, sponsoring his own critic. Thus, the poet, by becoming the client of Maecenas, is able, at least temporarily, to be both pro- and anti-Augustan at the same time. The nature of this carefully balanced position is perhaps best illustrated by the opening couplets of two poems from Book 3, published c.23 BCE:

Arma deus Caesar dices meditatur ad Indos,
et freta gemmiferi findere classe maris.

Caesar, the god, is planning arms against rich India and to split the straits of the gem-bearing sea with his fleet. (3.4.1-2)

Pacis Amor deus est, pacem uenentur amantes:

Stant mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.

Love is the god of peace, we lovers worship peace, and hard are my battles with my mistress. (3.5.1-2)

The couplet from the first poem appears to be a piece of typical Roman panegyric celebrating the plans of a fearless leader to conquer a foreign enemy and come home covered in glory and booty. The next poem, however, parodies the first and counterposes Love and peace to Caesar and arms. Poem 3.5, then, proceeds to evoke the standard elegiac conceit of *militia amoris*, while the fact that the lover's battles with his girl are termed "hard" is a clear sexual *double entendre*.

55. Book 4 of Propertius, published c.16 BCE, represents a fundamental change in the way the poet thinks of the elegiac genre. In part, this book represents a return to the genre's Callimachean roots. As the poet writes in 4.1, he shall become the Roman Callimachus, offering us a new *Atthis* dedicated to the *utris aeterna* itself: "sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum" ["I shall sing rites and days and the ancient names of places"] (4.1.69). Two lines later a second speaker, the Babylonian astrologer Horos,

interrupts the poet with a warning that Apollo opposes the poet's new direction. Propertius's task is to serve in the legions of Venus: "militiam Veneris blandis patriere sub armis" ["you will suffer the soldiery of Venus, wielding pleasing arms"] (4.1.137). This alternation of the aitiological with the amatory in large part characterizes Book 4 as a whole. Thus in 4.4, the poet tells the tale of how the Tarpeian rock, off which murderers and traitors were thrown, received its name from the treachery of Tarpeia, a Vestal virgin. In the traditional story, Tarpeia betrays the Roman citadel to Tattius, the Sabine commander, after being bribed. She is then executed on the spot by the Sabines themselves. In Propertius's version of the myth, however, Tarpeia betrays Rome for love not money. She is smitten with Tattius's beauty. In this fashion, the poet manages to combine the erotic with the aitiological to create a recognizably hybrid form. Poem 4.6 is, on the surface at least, a purely patriotic poem celebrating Augustus's victory at Actium. This poem is read by some as evidence of the poet's reconciliation with Augustus and by others as an exercise in satire. Poems 4.7 and 4.8 are the only poems on Cynthia in the last book. In 4.7, Cynthia returns from the dead to accuse Propertius of giving her a cheap funeral, abusing her slaves, and being unfaithful to her memory. It is a poem commemorating the death of elegy, as we have known it. Poem 4.8 takes us back to an earlier time, before Cynthia's death. It includes an aitiological element, when it recounts the story of an obscure snake cult in Lanuvium. At the same time, it vividly tells the tale of Cynthia surprising Propertius with two girls.

56. Overall, Book 4 shows Propertius searching for a new direction. There is a clear gesture in several poems toward embracing the national and patriotic through the aitiological. The Augustan regime is now firmly established and it has become obvious that there neither are, nor will be, any alternatives to it in the foreseeable future. The poet had best make his peace. Yet, every time the gesture of reconciliation is made it is accompanied by one of distancing. The story of Tarpeia's criminal love is told, but it is a story of love not very different from the elegist's own. The victor of Actium is celebrated, but in such an over-the-top fashion that it is impossible to tell the difference between panegyric and parody. Cynthia is dead, but in the next poem comes back to life. Perhaps the most significant factor in the whole of Book 4, however, is the increasing prominence of third person narrative. It is as if the very space that made the voice of the elegist possible was vanishing as the Augustan regime hardened into an established fact.

Ovid

57. Of course, on one level, we know that this was not true. In the very period when Propertius is writing Book 4, Ovid is beginning to publish the first edition of the *Amores* (c.19 BCE). Born in Sulmo in 43 BCE, Ovid was only 12 at the time of the battle of Actium. By the time he had reached his late

INTRODUCTION TO THE LATIN LOVE ELEGY

Georg Luck

Schoolmasters have special faces for them. Catullus, whose 'brutal frankness' revealed the suffering of his tormented soul (look of comprehension and pity . . . secret sorrow), irradiated by his delightful humour (wry smile); Tibullus, all rustic grace (pass on); Propertius, difficult – him in every sense – precious (*muse* of disaster); Ovid – great facility, bad end; an Augustan Oscar Wilde (Universal Tension).

Cyril Connolly, *The Sunday Times*, 29 November 1959

When we speak of an 'elegy', we usually think of a melancholy and meditative kind of poem. In ancient literature, however, an 'elegy' is defined only by its metre, by the alternating sequence of a dactylic hexameter and pentameter. This metrical pattern has a gentle, yet insistent musical quality. Propertius called it 'soft', *mollis*,¹ and Ovid compared the movement of the elegiac distich to the rise and fall of a jet of water: 'In six numbers let my work rise, and sink again in five.'² Elsewhere Ovid describes the personified *lily* as a beautiful woman with perfumed hair, clad in a gauzy robe. The fact that 'one of her feet is longer than the other' only adds to her charm.³

The earliest Greek elegies deal with a variety of themes: war, politics, the pleasures and pains of life in general, love, friendship, death. They communicate a variety of moods: joy and sadness, hope and despair, deeply personal beliefs and common thought. Such fragments as we have do not tell a story for the sake of the story; they do not compete with the epic. An early Greek elegy is at the same time more personal and less straightforward than the epic; it reveals more of the poet's personality, his tastes, his experiences, his philosophy of life.

The later history of the ancient elegy is marked by two important developments. (1) In the post-classical period it is adapted more generally to mythological narratives, without losing its personal and, sometimes, highly emotional character. A legend, as told by Callimachus, represents a very colourful and exciting tissue of visual impressions and side-comments. (2)

During the Augustan Age at Rome the elegy becomes the preferred medium of love-poetry.

The history of the love-elegy in Rome covers only a few decades: Catullus died shortly after 55 B.C.; Propertius' first book of elegies was published around 29 or 28 B.C.; Tibullus followed with his first book soon after; and the first edition of Ovid's *Amores* appeared shortly after 20 B.C. Within less than fifty years Latin elegiac poetry had compassed an astonishing wealth of themes and situations, styles and techniques. The Greek elegy developed slowly; it had its archaic period, its classical and post-classical age. These categories of literary history seem to lose their meaning when they are applied to the Latin elegy. Everything happened more quickly, at an almost feverish pace.

Ovid, the last of the elegiac love-poets, felt that they had all been 'members of a group', *sodales*. At the end of his funeral lament for Tibullus, he describes how the dead poet meets in the underworld the shades of Catullus and Calvus.⁴ In his own autobiography, written in exile, he remembers the 'friendly circle', *convictus*, and the 'comradeship', *sodalitium*, which included himself, Propertius, and two of Propertius' friends.⁵ These young men used to read their poems to each other, cultivating a common tradition, proud of being the true disciples of Callimachus and Philetas.

They knew that the life they led and the verse they wrote were not altogether respectable in the eyes of their contemporaries. Obviously they were not concerned with great religious and national issues. Sometimes they make a half-hearted attempt to defend their 'naughtiness', *nequitia*. They always seem to remember that the love-elegy is a 'playful' kind of poetry (*lusus*). This half-affectation, half-deprecatory term could be applied to lyrics, epigrams, bucolics, satires, but certainly not to tragedies and epics.⁶

Both Horace and Vergil had composed 'playful poems' in their youth, but they had gone on to more serious themes and modes in later years. Tibullus died too soon to follow their example; Propertius, in his 'Roman elegies' (Book IV), and Ovid in his *Fasti* tried to show that the elegiac metre, too, was suitable to more ambitious themes. But this was hardly more than an experiment, in the case of Propertius; and Ovid knew that he would be remembered by posterity as the 'playful author of tender love-poems', *tenerorum lassor amorum*.

The Latin elegists feel more apologetic about their way of life than about the kind of poetry they write. Like Callimachus who 'shaped his verse on a narrow lathe',⁷ they claim to be conscious craftsmen. They are trying to raise the elegy to a higher rank, to distinguish it from the epigram and the light improvisation. Hence they avoid certain expressions and phrases which are frequent in the epigram (Catullus, Martial).⁸ For 'kiss' they prefer *osculum*; the synonym *savium* belonged to the idiom of comedy (it is found only once, in Propertius 2.29.39).

Some poets were more fastidious than others. Propertius, for example, has

many colloquialisms found also in Catullus, but not in Tibullus and Ovid. In Latin, as in many other languages, diminutives have a colloquial ring. They appear frequently, as terms of endearment, or for purely metrical reasons, in Propertius' early poems. Their number decreases in his later books, as his style tends toward the elevated and grandiose. Tibullus uses them rarely, Ovid sparingly.

Occasionally the elegiac style admits of a word that is not exactly 'vulgar', but not dignified enough for the style of the epic and tragedy; for example, *plorare*, 'to cry', instead of *flere*; and *lassus*, 'tired', instead of *fatuus*. It seems that the elegiac poets hesitate to divorce their language completely from that of everyday conversation. They dislike using certain words that had disappeared from the spoken language long ago and were (presumably for this very reason) considered effective in epic verse. *Exemplo*, 'immediately', appears ten times in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but never in his love-elegies.

Compared to their great contemporaries, Horace and Vergil, the elegiac poets were always at a slight disadvantage. They were read, they had an enthusiastic and devoted audience, but they never rose to the rank of 'classical' authors. Whereas we have various sets of ancient commentaries and notes on Horace and Vergil, the text of Propertius, Ovid and Tibullus is bare of explanations. This could mean that, even in Antiquity, they were read less extensively in schools than Horace and Vergil, partly because they were felt to be less suitable *virginibus puerisque*, and partly because their range of experiences was somewhat limited.

They write about love, their love. For the first time in Roman literature, love is taken seriously. Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius had shown the power of love over a woman. Plautus and Terence had brought enamoured adolescents on to the comic stage, but treated their passion in a conventional manner. The happy ending was inevitable. The other extreme we have in Lucretius. He considers love as a threat to the Epicurean peace of mind.

In Lucretius' own time the attitude toward love in literature changes radically. The society of Catullus begins to pay attention to love and love-affairs, one's own and those of others. Is this a case of literature imitating life or life imitating literature? All the poets of the Augustan Age deal with erotic themes; even Vergil cannot conceive of his serious national epic without a love-intrigue. It is possible that there was a love-intrigue in Naevius' *Ballum Punium*, but the extant fragments give no indication of its nature, and Vergil was free to omit it if he had found it unsuitable.

This society refused to consider marriage as a happy end, but rather as an intermediary stage, a means to an end. A legal marriage had become a short-termed association for which nothing was necessary but the free assent of both man and woman. No religious ceremonies, no legal formalities were required. It was easy to obtain a divorce. Cicero's daughter Tullia had been divorced three times when she died at the age of thirty-nine. Maecenas' wife Terentia had, as everyone knew, intimate relations with Augustus; her

husband divorced her and married her again soon afterwards; 'he had only one wife, but he got married a thousand times', Seneca remarks on their frequent quarrels and reconciliations.⁹

A Roman girl could be engaged at the age of ten and married at twelve to a man chosen by her father. When she grew up to discover the meaning of love, she was no longer free. During the early centuries of the Roman Republic, as long as Rome was a city with a predominantly Roman population, the women must have accepted this situation because it was all they knew. After Rome had risen to political power, foreigners from all parts of the Mediterranean world began to stream into the city, first as traders, visitors or prisoners of war. At the beginning of the second century B.C., many of them had taken permanent residence in the capital and were active in business, or creative in literature and the arts.

With the increase in material prosperity, a taste for new pleasures and luxuries developed. In the first century B.C., we find in Rome a large number of Greek courtesans, many of whom were cultured, well-read, and accomplished dancers and musicians. They were much sought after by the fashionable set of young men. No wonder that the more sensitive and passionate among the native Roman ladies were envious of the glitter and excitement of a different way of life and resented the tedious routine of their households.

During this last century of the Roman Republic, a curious social phenomenon takes place. Ladies of the best families begin to live a rather independent life. It is not always possible to determine whether the women we meet in the love-poetry of this period are Roman matrons or Greek freedwomen. Carullus Lesbia was a consul's wife, but Cicero speaks with heavy sarcasm of her notorious conduct. In A.D. 19 another Roman lady, the daughter of a distinguished man, registered with the police as a public prostitute. Gallus, the statesman, soldier and poet, fell in love with a Greek freedwoman whom he calls Lycoris in his elegies. Tibullus' Delia and Nemesis may have belonged to the same class. In the case of Propertius, it is not clear whether Cynthia, who lives and behaves in all respects like these other girls, was not actually of an old Roman family. Sulpicia, the daughter of Servius, proudly signs her love-poems with her name.

As the traditional ideals of marriage lost their meaning, man and woman alike were seeking love outside marriage. The memory of traditional values such as 'faith', *fides*, 'affection and respect', *pietas*, and 'chastity', *castitas*, were nevertheless still alive; only they were now transferred from the legal union between man and wife to the loose association between the lover and his mistress.

Tibullus paints in idyllic colours the life he wishes to lead in the country at the side of his Delia. Propertius rejoices when he hears that the Emperor has withdrawn one of his marital laws which seemed to threaten his affair with Cynthia, but he speaks of her as 'for ever my mistress and for ever my

wife'.¹⁰ In one of his late poems Carullus reminds Lesbia that he loved her 'as a father loves his children'.¹¹

To these poets the 'eternal union', *foedus aeternum*, between a man and a woman no longer seems possible nor desirable within a legal marriage; it can only be realized in the ideal love-affair. Ovid swears by all the gods that he will never seek another mistress than Corinna.¹²

The elegiac poets and, later, the satirists and the Christian church fathers, convey only one side of the picture. Many private documents, such as letters and funeral inscriptions, show that among the middle and lower classes the old ideals of loyalty and affection were still alive. Augustus tried to impose them by force on the upper classes, but the conjugal laws which he proclaimed at various times after 28 B.C. met with such violent opposition that he was obliged to postpone their enforcement until A.D. 9. At about the same time, by an act of curious brutality, he showed how determined he was. He banished Ovid, the poet who had symbolized the frivolity of a whole period, on questionable charges, to the Black Sea, where he died obscurely in A.D. 17, without ever seeing Rome again. His exile marks the end of elegiac love-poetry in Rome.

Notes

- 1 Propertius 1.7.19: *et frustra capias mollem componere versum*; cf. 2.1.2 and already Hemesianax, quoted by Athen. 13, p. 597 F.
- 2 Ovid, *Amores* 1.1.27f: *sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat*.
- 3 Ovid, *Amores* 3.1.7ff.
- 4 Ovid, *Amores* 3.9.16f.
- 5 Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.45ff.
- 6 H. Wagenvoort, 'Ludus poeticus', now reprinted in: *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (1956), 30ff.
- 7 Propertius 2.34.43; on the meaning of this image see Richard Bentley's note on Horace, *Art Poetica* 441.
- 8 The following remarks are based on B. Axelson, *Ungpoetische Wörter* (Lund 1945), 18f, 26, 36.
- 9 Seneca, *Epistulae*, 114.6.
- 10 Propertius 2.7, 2.6.42.
- 11 Carullus 72, 3f.
- 12 Ovid, *Amores* 3.2.61f.